

QUETTA

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UNDP and Balochistan Government Join Forces for Sustainable Development

Syed Ali Shah:

QUETTA: In a significant development aimed at addressing the pressing issues of climate change and sustainable development in Balochistan, Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Ms. Kanni Wignara, held constructive discussions with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti. The meeting highlighted the collaborative efforts between the UNDP and the Balochistan government to implement vital projects across the region.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti emphasized the urgency of combating the challenges posed by climate change, particularly in the wake of abnormal weather patterns leading to substantial damage to crops and infrastructure. He underscored the importance of developing comprehensive strategies to mitigate the impact of climate change and ensure sustainable development in the province.

Additional Chief Secretary Development, Saboor Kakar, UNDP, Balochistan Chief, Gulzar Durrani and other officials were also present on the occasion.

Acknowledging Balochistan's vulnerability to climate change, Chief Minister Bugti outlined his government's proactive approach in formulating

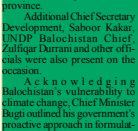
Moreover, Chief Minister Bugti emphasized Balochistan's potential as an attractive destination for international investment. He assured potential investors of streamlined processes and comprehensive facilitation through a one-window operation, aiming to create a conducive environment for domestic and international investors alike.

Under the auspices of the UNDP, Assistant Secretary General Ms. Kanni Wignara disclosed the formulation of a comprehensive district development plan encompassing 10 districts of Balochistan. This plan aims to address key development challenges in areas such as education, health, and climate resilience, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Assistant Secretary General Wignara reiterated the UNDP's commitment to collaborating closely with the Balochistan Government in various fields, including climate

change adaptation, education and healthcare. He emphasized the importance of collective action in addressing the resettlement of flood victims, promoting alternative energy sources, and strengthening the rule of law.

The meeting between the UNDP and Balochistan Government signals a promising step towards fostering sustainable development and resilience in the region. With mutual cooperation and concerted efforts, both entities are poised to make tangible strides towards a more prosperous and resilient Balochistan.



Secretary Information Emphasizes Access to Information as Cornerstone of Democracy

Staff Reporter:



QUETTA: In an recent consultation meeting organized by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in Balochistan, Information Secretary Imran Khan reiterated the fundamental importance of access to information in fostering healthy, knowledgeable, and civilized societies.

Khan emphasized that transparency and governance could be significantly improved through widespread access to information, affirming that every citizen holds the right to access information—a cornerstone of democracy. The meeting, attended by a host of notable figures including Director General Public Relations (DGPR), Muhammad Noor Khattar, Syed Tanveer Akhtar, Saeed Ahmad Shah-wani, Manzoor Ahmed Magazi, Taimoor Khan Kakar, Abdul Bari Mandokhail and several government officials, witnessed discussions centered around the implementation of the Access to Information Act. Khan commended NED's advocacy efforts

in support of the Right to Information Act, highlighting the potential of its full implementation to contribute to the public good, sustainable development, and the establishment of robust institutions.

Regarding the progress of the Access to Information Act, Khan informed the participants that information commissions had been established both at the federal level and in various provinces, with efforts underway to establish commissions in Balochistan. He assured that the appointment of a Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners would soon follow.

Director General Public Relations Muhammad Noor Khattar also spoke at the event, outlining the Department of Information and System Public Relations' initiatives for RTI implementation. Khattar stressed the need for connectivity between information commissions in different provinces, a fundamental right of access to information.

Additionally, a survey is slated to be conducted to gauge public sentiment and understanding regarding access to information laws. The consultation meeting marks a significant step towards advancing transparency, accountability, and democratic principles in Balochistan, underlining the commitment of the government and civil society to uphold the fundamental right of access to information.

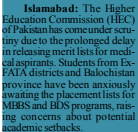
In economies, only when a productive capacity exceeds global market demands can be called overcapacity. Fake NEVs are, for example, "overcapacity" allegations, China's supply capacity in NEVs cannot meet global demands. Data speaks. According to the research firm EVTank, the global sales of NEVs reached 14.65 million units in 2023, a year-over-year increase of 34 million units. In the same year, China produced 9.587 million NEVs, a 35.8 percent and 37.9 percent increase, respectively.

Among the 9.495 million units sold, approximately 8.292 million NEVs were consumed in China—a 33.5 percent growth from 2022, and around 1.2 million units were exported overseas—up 77.2 percent year-over-year. This clearly demonstrates the balance between the production and sales in NEVs. In addition, most China-produced NEVs were consumed domestically, contradicting the Western allegation that Chinese cheap cars are "flooding" and "distorting" the global market.

According to Global Electric Vehicle Outlook 2023 released by the International Energy Agency (IEA), total EV

Delayed Merit List HEC puts Educational Year On Risk

Education Desk:



Islamabad: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has considered urgency due to the prolonged delay in releasing merit lists for medical aspirants. Students in Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) have already commenced several months ago. Many fear that this delay could result in a wasted academic year.

Salar Baloch, a student from Khuzdar district, expressed his frustration, saying, "I walk kilometers away from home to check the latest updates of the HEC list but return disappointed." His sentiment echoes that of countless other students who are eagerly awaiting their placement.

Last year, dozens of stu-

dents faced a similar predicament when the University of Health Sciences (UHS) refused to accept their admissions. Naimat Ullah Kakkar, an HEC scholar from Pishin, recounted his experience at Gujranwala Medical College (GMC), where the college administration asked him to officially join in 2023 despite his initial visit in August 2022.

The delayed display of merit lists has become a recurring issue, causing serious grievances among medical aspirants. Syed Muhammad Yaseen, founder of Students Nexus by SMU—an online students' network—highlighted the psychological and social stress faced by students due to the institution's nonchalant approach toward timely list publication.

As the fate of these aspiring doctors hangs in the balance, stakeholders are urging the HEC to address this critical issue promptly.

The timely release of merit lists is essential to ensure that students can plan their academic journeys without unnecessary disruptions.

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Iranian gas has potential to propel Pakistan's flagging economy: Shahid Rasheed



ISLAMABAD (INP): Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt has said that natural gas from Iran has the potential to revive Pakistan's flagging economy.

In a statement issued here on Thursday, he said that the approval of the United States to the project was a setback to Pakistan's interests, which he said should be reconsidered despite 45 years of sanctions, and its influence has increased on a global level. Pakistan should establish high-level political and diplomatic contact with the US to approve its stance on the gas pipeline, he said adding that the help of 'friendly countries' should also be sought in this regard.

The business leader said that US policymakers should be apprised that forty-five years have passed since the American sanctions on Iran, but this has not gone bankrupt, nor has there been a popular revolution. Iran has developed despite sanctions, and its influence was increasing instead of decreasing, he maintained.

Shahid Rasheed Butt continued to say that the US authorities need to be convinced that the economic sanctions have failed, so another way should be adopted in which Pakistan can fully help America.

He noted that the United States needs better relations with Iran to advance its regional interests. The sooner this fact is recognized, the better.

"Pakistan buys a billion dollars worth of gas from Iran, it will not matter to Iran, but Pakistan's economy will recover," he said.

Petrol, diesel prices set to fall in Pakistan

KARACHI (INP): Petroleum prices in Pakistan are likely to go down in the upcoming fortnightly review as global oil prices continue their downward trend, private to channel said on Thursday quoting sources.

The price of petrol decreased by \$1.86 per barrel to \$107.16 per barrel, while the price of diesel in the global market recorded a fall of \$4.3 per barrel to \$104.76 per barrel.

Following the global trend, the petrol price likely to go down by Rs5 per liter in the domestic market. Similarly, the price of diesel may fall by Rs7.85 per liter for consumers in the Pakistani market.

During the review, the federal government increased the petrol price by Rs 4.53 per liter, and the price of diesel by Rs 8.14 per liter.

The petrol was currently being sold at Rs293.94 per liter while the High-Speed Diesel was available at Rs 290.38 per liter.

Oil prices in international markets were little changed on Thursday as falling demand in the U.S., the world's biggest oil user, amid signs of a slowing economy, countered with a rebound for a widening conflict in the key Middle East producing region.

Brent crude futures edged up 9 cents to \$88.11 a barrel at 09:20 GMT, after falling 0.5% in the previous session.

Life of late SM Munir beacon light for business community: SM Tanveer



ISLAMABAD (INP): Patron-in-Chief United Business Group (UBG), S.M. Tanveer has said that the life of late SM Munir is a beacon light for the business community of the country and he would continue to serve the community with the same spirit from the platform of United Business Group in pursuance of the mission of his late father.

He was speaking as chief guest of the plaque unveiling ceremony of S.M. Munir Auditorium at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) here on Thursday, it was mentioned here that late SM Munir was a renowned industrialist, former President FPCCI, former Chief Executive TDP and the founder Patron-in-Chief of the United Business Group.

S.M. Tanveer said that business community all over the world was considered as the backbone of the economy of each and every country and the United Business Group will continue to work for the benefit of the community and to avoid any discrimination for its success and prosperity.

counting the achievements of S.M. Munir vowed to follow his footsteps for the cause of the business community. He narrated some of the success of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry under his leadership like signing of an MoU with Gulberg Greens for the construction of a state of the art office center, acceptance of a proposal for the construction of an Industrial Estate.

Inking of an agreement with CDA for the up gradation of the workrooms of different markets, Establishment of the Mentoring Council at ICCI for settling rent matters between tenants and owners, holding of a successful Business Opportunities Conference in Dubai, Establishment of NADRA Facilitation Center at ICCI, installation of filtration plants in commercial as well as residential areas of Islamabad, professional of computers to educational institutions, installation of CCTV cameras and their linkage with safe city project and several other conferences to enhance the soft image of the country.

President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Baktawari while re-

Is there overcapacity or insufficient supply in China's new energy?

Mir Salam Jozgazi:



As a developing country deeply intertwined in the global industrial chains, China has been providing the world with cost-efficient and high-quality products. But interestingly, the U.S.-led West has been enthusiastically hyping China's so-called "overcapacity" in new energy vehicles (NEVs), lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaic products.

Is China's productive capacity excessive as some Westerners hype or insufficient to meet global demands?

In economies, only when a productive capacity exceeds global market demands can be called overcapacity. Fake NEVs are, for example, "overcapacity" allegations, China's supply capacity in NEVs cannot meet global demands. Data speaks. According to the research firm EVTank, the global sales of NEVs reached 14.65 million units in 2023, a year-over-year increase of 34 million units. In the same year, China produced 9.587 million NEVs, a 35.8 percent and 37.9 percent increase, respectively.

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NEV companies as well. For instance, American firm Tesla received Chinese state subsidies for more than 100,000 vehicles sold in the country in 2020 for a combined amount of 2.123 billion yuan (\$329 million).

NEV subsidies are not China-unique. For the goal of "carbon neutrality" and "carbon peak," a number of countries have launched subsidy schemes for EVs and plug-in hybrids. Since 2016, Germany has been offering a purchase grant to new vehicles—4,000 euros (\$421) for non-hybrid electric cars and 3,000 euros (\$3196) for plug-in hybrids.

The French government has offered buyers a cash incentive of between 5,000 euros (\$5,327) and 7,000 euros (\$7,475) to get more EVs on the road. Under the Inflation Reduction Act, the U.S. offers a tax credit worth up to \$7,500 to those who buy NEVs, and \$4,000 for used EVs.

In this context, China's industrial policies have nothing to be hyped about.

The Chinese government is committed to attracting foreign enterprises to build factories in China, enhancing the resilience of domestic industrial chains, boosting employment, and achieving the "dual carbon" target at an earlier date.

Western hype of China's overcapacity is a pure lie. The rapid development of China's industry is a result of the country's cost advantages and its effective integration of industrial chains. Instead of containing China, the U.S.-led Western countries should conform to economic laws and market rules. Cooperation with China is the best solution to sustained growth.

AS THE VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Quetta Gas Explosions: Urgent Calls for SSGC Accountability and Gas Load Shedding Schedule

Editorial:

The recent spate of gas-related explosions in Quetta has cast a dark shadow over the city, leaving behind shattered lives and a community grappling with grief.

Consumers Bore The Brunt Of SSGC Inefficiency

The most heart-wrenching episode unfolded near Quetta East Bypass Bhosha Mandi, where a house, torn apart by a gas explosion, became a tragic testament to the vulnerabilities faced by Quetta's residents.

Silent Menace Of Gas Leaks Pose A Serious Threat

Quetta, it seems, has become a city under siege, besieged not by external threats but by the silent menace of gas leaks. The frequency of such incidents has not only left the community in mourning but has also prompted questions about the efficacy of safety measures and the maintenance of gas infrastructure.

It is disheartening to note that Quetta has been no stranger to gas-related tragedies in recent times. Each incident not only inflicts physical harm on the victims but also sows the seeds of collective psychosis and uncertainty.

SSGC Should Not Evade Accountability

The Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) being the custodian of gas infrastructure, must not evade accountability in the face of such calamities. The lack of responsiveness from the company's head office in Karachi to inquiries from Daily Quetta Voice is both perplexing and unacceptable.

One of the glaring issues highlighted in the aftermath of these incidents is the need for a structured schedule of gas load shedding. The prevailing chilly weather in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan exacerbates the situation, leading to prolonged and unannounced load shedding.

In this editorial, we call upon the Sui Southern Gas Company to take immediate and decisive action. The company must announce a clear schedule of gas load shedding, ensuring that consumers are aware of the timings and can plan accordingly.

The safety of Quetta's residents should be non-negotiable, and the SSGC must collaborate with local authorities to conduct thorough investigations into the recent incidents. Only through a transparent and accountable approach can the root causes be identified and rectified, preventing similar tragedies in the future.

As the injured continue their arduous journey towards recovery, the entire community watches and waits for tangible actions that will guarantee the safety and well-being of Quetta residents in their homes. The Sui Southern Gas Company must rise to the occasion and prove its commitment to the safety of the people it serves. The time for decisive action is now.

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Striving in uncertainty

By Nadeem Hussain

PAKISTAN'S youth employment opportunities should be the priority. Successive governments in the past two decades have come up with programmes like Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme, E-Rozgar, and the Entrepreneurship Development Programme, etc. But despite such initiatives, millions of young people remain unemployed. An American colleague and I visited India recently. We were struck by the number of young people in this country who are often considered to be one of the greatest national assets. But how do we channel this energy and develop this resource to bring prosperity to our struggling nation of 240 million? This question mostly remains unanswered. Some propose vocational training, while others think providing

Balochistan's Climate Crisis: Impact, Causes, and Solutions

Chandni Kakar:

Balochistan is a region of unique geological diversity and a long coastline is grappling with severe climate change challenges. This article delves into the causes and consequences of climate change in Balochistan, shedding light on its impact on agriculture, water resources, and the overall ecosystem.

Impact on Agriculture

Impact on Agriculture and Water Resources Climate change has negatively impacted agriculture, causing fruits and crops to suffer. Decreased rainfall and snowfall have led to a significant drop in the underground water level, affecting both farmers and the overall landscape.

Migration and Economic Consequences

The scarcity of water and extreme heat have driven people to migrate to urban centers like Quetta in search of employment opportunities. Reduced agricultural income from fruit sales has further strained the region's economy.

Health Implications During Severe Droughts

Primary Causes Experts attribute large-scale climate change in Balochistan to deforestation, impact of the cutting of juniper forests in Ziarat, and the use of substandard fuel in winter.

These practices have increased carbon levels in the atmosphere and disrupted rainfall patterns. Droughts in Balochistan, such as the one from 1997 to 2002, resulted in widespread health issues, including diseases like Congo virus, famine, TB, malaria, and hepatitis, particularly affecting vulnerable populations, including infants and young children.

Overexploitation of Tubewells and Falling Water Levels

Balochistan faces the challenge of over 50,000 legal and illegal tubewells extracting large quantities of groundwater daily, leading to a rapid decline in underground water levels, exacerbating the water crisis.

Global Climate Change and Balochistan's Rising Temperatures

Provincial Secretary of Environment and Climate Change, Niaz Ahmed, emphasizes that climate change is a global problem. Balochistan is experiencing rising temperatures, with Quetta reaching up to 41 degrees Celsius, highlighting the urgency of addressing climate change.

Balochistan's climate crisis is a result of multiple factors, including infrastructure weaknesses, population growth, poverty, and political instability. Addressing these challenges and implementing effective climate change mitigation strategies are crucial for the region's future.

Conclusion

Balochistan's unique ecosystem and geographical characteristics have made it particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Deforestation, overexploitation of water resources, and rising temperatures are exacerbating the crisis. Recognizing the global nature of climate change and adopting effective mitigation measures are essential for safeguarding Balochistan's environment, agriculture, and overall well-being. The writer is a Balochistan-based journalist and can be contacted at @kakarChand97707

Debt, climate, inflation

By Ali Tauqeer Sheik:

DEBT, climate, and inflation have in recent years become intertwined planks of the spring meetings hosted by the World Bank and IMF. The agenda for this year's meetings, which concluded last week, included finding ways to reform the global financial architecture, mobilise additional development and climate finance, and address the burden of public debt that is crowding out crucial investments.

The concept of debt sustainability generally refers to the ability of a country to manage its debt without unrealistic adjustment to the balance of income and expenditure. The agenda for this year's meetings was particularly important as they coincided with the 80th anniversary of Bretton Woods. While the World Bank is seeking to reform the global financial system, the IMF is emerging as the guardian of global financial and climate resilience.

They are now faced with the unfolding challenge of financing development and climate change and the need to equip themselves to deal with the deepening impacts of debt, climate change, and inflation. It is too early to know exactly what was decided at the spring

meetings. The details will emerge slowly and be reflected in the policy decisions during the year. While Pakistan has been negotiating its extended Fund Facility with the IMF, key issues of particular interest to it were discussed at the spring meetings: i) reversal of development gains and increase in poverty levels, ii) addressing the burden of public debt that is crowding out crucial investments, iii) strengthening global cooperation and multilateralism, and iv) reaffirming the commitment to the SDGs.

like Pakistan, the initiative has encouraged the inclusion of a clause that would stipulate a temporary suspension of interest payments on debt. The additional financial resources for rebuilding it is argued, should be in the form of grants, instead of loans. Pakistan has a vested interest in the success of the Bridgetown Initiative. It has built an environment for the V20 Accra-Marrakech agenda on debt sustainability. Launched at the 2023 spring meetings, it seeks to reform the global debt architecture to better address debt sustainability challenges. The Vulnerable 20 is a coalition of climate-vulnerable developing countries, and an offshoot bloc of the broader Climate Vulnerable Forum launched in 2015.

Third, mobilising \$1.5 trillion per year of private sector investment in green transformation. Fourth, strengthening the governance of international financial institutions to make them more representative, equitable and inclusive. Fifth, creating an international network of Friends supporting global green and just transformations. Sixth, restoring debt sustainability and supporting countries in restructuring their debt with long-term low-interest financing. Responding to climate-triggered disasters in countries

expanding MDB lending for climate and sustainable development by i) funding temporary damage from climate change, and ii) making the Financial system more climate-resilient. This has catalysed a global debate on systemic reform and coordinated action on climate and development. Most remarkably, its articulation on supporting the reform of the World Loss & Damage Fund has helped create an enabling environment for about \$750 million in pledges to the fund.

The Bridgetown initiative was a key topic of discussion at this year's spring meetings. There is indeed resistance to reforming existing power structures, faces political and technical challenges in reshaping the global financial system to better address the debt and liquidity needs of developing countries. Overcoming these obstacles will require sustained commitment to engage a wide range of stakeholders. Pakistan's case of getting a pause in repayments, or the restructuring of its debt, and accessing international climate finance will enjoy stronger credibility if its narrative is closely aligned with the global discourse. For this, we'll need to restructure our position and seek alignments with climate-vulnerable groups.

Many attendees found the most inspirational session to be a film Above the Sleeping Giants, produced by the DARD foundation on the achievement of a young Pakistani mountaineer, Sherbroze Kasit. He has planted his country's flag on 13 of the highest mountain peaks in the world. Recently, an ageing Nawaz Man-made technology is maturing faster than God's humankind. Who knows how soon AI will replace live authors? Sooner than we fear. Authors (and especially university professors)

chalk vs a tanga, matured cheese. AI four argued that does not produce literature — culled after centuries of learning, fuelled by inspiration. It is most probably byproduct of three or four unseen minds, expressing themselves through words, spawned from binary codes. Sedaris dismissed an AI-produced text as one composed of an eight-year-old, producing for options on the saurus. But even eight-year-olds grow up. Man-made technology is maturing faster than God's humankind. Who knows how soon AI will replace live authors? Sooner than we fear. Authors (and especially university professors)

By F.S. Aijazuddin:

THE advent of spring is potent. Since its debut in 2013, Lahore LitFest has grown into a cultural festival that performs separate functions simultaneously. It demonstrates its flexibility, it spreads itself over five covered halls and numerous open-air lawns in the AI Hamra complex. If one has reason to cavil about LitFest, it is that too many programmes are crammed into too few days, with seasons of interest competing unfavourably with each other. At the Lahore LitFest, for example, a visitor had to choose between discussions during the same hour on 'Muslims in the West and Pakistan' and 'Plants of the Quran',

two world wars in the West and two revolutions in Russia and China for their women to become emancipated. Women in Pakistan are gaining their careers slowly — their innate rights in a battle against suffocating patriarchy. They spend their careers provided poor role models. A woman prime minister (Benazir Bhutto) and now a female chief minister Punjab (Maryam Nawaz) both had to rely upon their maiden names to advance their careers. No Margaret Roberts (later Mrs Thatcher) here, just as a President Millard Fillmore occupied the White House. For those who could not attend the summit, technology offers a virtual substitute.

They can download the recordings of the sessions. Particularly recommended is one on the 'Future of the Written Word in an Age of AI'. Four writers assessed their vulnerability to AI. Each of them — Monica Moin, Moin Hamid, the novelist Hannah Dughan and the American humorist David Shields — generated texts which, at the press of a cursor, produced a pastiche of their own individual writing styles. Sedaris read out an AI version of a fictitious story — a man trapped in a latrine, and then his own description of the same incident. The AI version, especially, had been sharp — insipid

are all too aware that attentive readership is wanting, being replaced by bytes and soundbites and fabricated prose. Many attendees found the most inspirational session to be a film Above the Sleeping Giants, produced by the DARD foundation on the achievement of a young Pakistani mountaineer, Sherbroze Kasit. He has planted his country's flag on 13 of the highest mountain peaks in the world. Recently, an ageing Nawaz Man-made technology is maturing faster than God's humankind. Who knows how soon AI will replace live authors? Sooner than we fear. Authors (and especially university professors)

Oh, for the Alifates of the Museo del Prado, Madrid. His informed discourse on Eurocentrism compensated those whom visa restrictions deny the chance of seeing the originals. The plight of Pakistani women squirm out of poverty. Millard Fillmore would benefit, they said, from the use of smartphones to expand domestic e-commerce. Remember: took

places for creativity and advancement. The US has led with the unicorns (start-ups valued at over \$1 billion for many years, owing to its top-quality higher education, robust venture capital ecosystem, entrepreneurial culture, and strong innovation hubs. Pakistan needs to field its young in the global ground of innovation. In 2023 alone, India sent a total of 131,338 young men and women to American colleges and universities on F-1 student visas, while Pakistan managed to send only 3,253 students in the same year. F-1 visas issued to Pakistanis account for less than one per cent of all F-1 visas, whereas for Indians, the figure is roughly 30pc. The result at the highest level? The heads of two of the world's top five tech companies — Microsoft and Google — came to the US after completing their undergraduate studies in India.

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Cultural summits

Use of alcohol and e-cigarettes among youth 'alarming': WHO

UNITED NATIONS (INP) The widespread use of alcohol and e-cigarettes among adolescents is "alarming", according to a report released on Thursday by the World Health Organization's (WHO) European branch, which recommended measures to limit access.

Based on survey data from 280,000 young people aged 11, 13 and 15 in Europe, Central Asia and Canada, the WHO said it showed a "concerning picture" of substance use among young people.

The "long-term consequences of these trends are significant, and policy-makers cannot afford to ignore these alarming findings," the health body said.

The report found that 57 percent of 15-year-olds had drunk alcohol at least once, for girls the figure was 59 percent, compared to 56 percent for boys.

The WHO noted that overall drinking had decreased for boys, while it had increased for girls.

When it came to current use — defined as having drunk at least once in the last 30 days — eight percent of 11-year-old boys reported having done so, compared to five percent for girls.

But by age 15, girls had an escalating trend, with 38 percent of girls saying they had drunk at least once in the last 30 days, while only 36 percent of boys had.

"These findings highlight how available

and normalised alcohol is, showing the urgent need for better policy measures to protect children and young people from harms caused by alcohol," said WHO Europe — which gathers 53 countries including several in Central Asia.

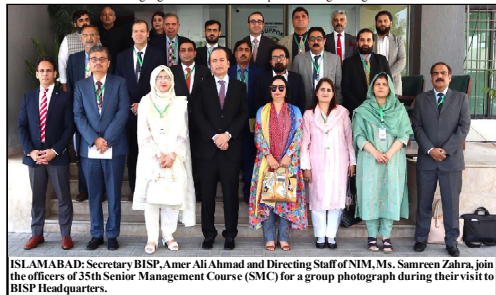
In addition, nine percent of teenagers reported having experienced "significant drunkenness" — having been drunk at least twice. The WHO said this rate climbed from five percent among 13-year-olds to 20 percent for 15-year-olds, "demonstrating an escalation in alcohol abuse among youth".

The report also highlighted the increased use of e-cigarettes — often called vapes — among teenagers.

While smoking is declining, with 13 percent of 11-15-year-olds having smoked in 2022, two percentage points less than four years earlier, the report noted that many of them have instead adopted e-cigarettes — which have overtaken cigarettes among adolescents.

Around 32 percent of 15-year-olds have used an e-cigarette, and 20 percent reported having used one in the last 30 days.

"The widespread use of harmful substances among children in many countries across the European Region — and beyond — is a serious public health threat," WHO Regional Director for Europe Hans Kluge said in a statement.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary BISP, Anwar Ali Ahmad and Director Staff NIM, Ms. Samreen Zahra, join the officers of 35th Senior Management Course (SMC) for a group photograph during their visit to BISP Headquarters.

Pro-Palestinian protests spread at US universities

CALIFORNIA (INP) Spiraling pro-Palestinian protests that are rocking universities across the United States spread to more campuses Wednesday, triggering suggestions from a senior Republican leader at the National Guard could be brought in. The comments from House Speaker Mike Johnson are likely to evoke strong emotions in a country where the 1970 killing by National Guardsmen of unarmed students protesting the Vietnam war lives on in folk memory.

Demonstrations erupted at the University of Southern California on Wednesday, and in Texas, where a tense stand-off developed between students and police in riot gear, with more than 20 people de-

tained. It was the latest confrontation between law enforcement and students angry at the mounting death toll in Israel's war against Hamas.

The movement began at Columbia University in New York where dozens of arrests were made last week after university authorities called in police to quell an occupation of Jewish students said was threatening anti-Semitic. Johnson told reporters at Columbia that if the demonstrations were not contained quickly it would be "an appropriate time for the National Guard."

He said he intended to demand US President Joe Biden "take action," and warned that the demonstrations "place a tar-

get on the backs of Jewish students in the United States." White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden backed free speech.

The president believes that free speech, debate and nondiscrimination on college campuses are important, she told reporters.

Student protesters say they are expressing solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza, where the death toll has topped 34,200, according to the Hamas health ministry, and are calling on universities to divest from companies with ties to Israel. The demonstrators — including a number of Jewish students — have disavowed instances of anti-Semitism.

But pro-Israel supporters, and others worried about campus safety, have pointed to anti-Semitic incidents and alleged that campuses are encouraging intimidation and hate speech.

Police said they had arrested more than 20 people, with the state's governor Greg Abbott urging swift punishment.

"These protesters belong in jail," he wrote on social media.

"Students joining in hate-filled, anti-Semitic protests at any public college or university in Texas should be expelled."

Porters, and others worried about campus safety, have pointed to anti-Semitic incidents and alleged that campuses are encouraging intimidation and hate speech.

Police said they had arrested more than 20 people, with the state's governor Greg Abbott urging swift punishment.

"These protesters belong in jail," he wrote on social media.

"Students joining in hate-filled, anti-Semitic protests at any public college or university in Texas should be expelled."

MQM-P 'agrees' on removal of Kamran Tessori

KARACHI (INP) The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) changed its strategy for the appointment of Governor Shaukat Kamran Khan Tessori as likely to be replaced by another party colleague.

The sources privy to the development said that the MQM-P, which earlier refused to replace Kamran Tessori, has now shown flexibility on the matter.

The sources within the party said that Barrister Farogh Naseem has emerged as a strong candidate to replace Kamran Tessori for the

slot. It is pertinent to mention here that the ruling party in Sindh, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) demanded Tessori's removal from office, accusing him of "creating a political divide and further widening the gap between urban and rural areas of the province."

PPP Sindh General Secretary Senator Waqar Mehdhi said that Tessori had not succeeded in closing the gap between the urban and rural areas, and politics.

In the reply, the MQM-P termed Mehdhi's demand as "unnecessary and non-serious."

The PPP should address the growing sense of deprivation during its 15-year rule in Sindh. The PPP does not have the right to comment on the performance of Governor Sindh," the MQM-P added. Earlier, it was reported that Justice Maqbool Baqar (Retd) has emerged as the frontrunner to become the next Sindh Governor.

Maqbool Baqar (Retd) has served as the caretaker chief minister of Sindh while being considered as the strongest candidate to succeed current Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori.

Speaking to a private TV channel, Baqar said that he would be extending him facilitation over his likely appointment as the Sindh Governor, however, the former interim CM Sindh said that he was not officially informed regarding the matter. Before the government formation, Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhattu Zardari had also reacted to speculations regarding replacing Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori. A journalist asked the PPP chairman if his party has reservations against Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori belonging to the MQM-P.



ISLAMABAD: Zoe Ware Political Counselor at the British High Commission called on Minister for Privatization, Board of Investment and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan.



ISLAMABAD: Members National Assembly called on Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in connection with formation of National Assembly Standing Committee at Parliament House.

SM Munir's services for industry lauded

ISLAMABAD (INP) S.M. Tanveer Patron-in-Chief United Business Group has said that the life of late SM Munir is a beacon light for the business

community of the country and he would continue to serve the community with the same spirit from the platform of United Business Group in pursuance of the mission of his late father.

He said this while addressing as chief guest at the unveiling ceremony of S.M. Munir auditorium at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

It merits to mention here that late S.M. Munir was a renowned industrialist, former President FPCCI, former Chief Executive TDAP and the founder Patron-in-

Chief of the United Business Group. S.M. Tanvir said that business community all over the world is considered as the backbone of the economy of each and every country and the United Business Group will continue to serve it without any discrimination for its success and prosperity.

President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry Atif Ikram Sheikh said that late S.M. Munir was his mentor and role model and

that he holds Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry in high esteem especially its President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari. He added that FPCCI is working day and night to incorporate some very important suggestions in the coming budget for the benefit of the country as well as the business community.

President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari while recounting the achievements of S.M. Munir vowed to follow his footprints for the cause of the business community. He narrated some of the success of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry under his leadership like signing of an MoU with Gulberg Greens for the construction of a state of the art expo center, Acceptance of a proposal for the construction of an Industrial Estate, Inking of an agreement with CDA for the upgradation of the washrooms of different markets, Establishment of the Mediation Council at ICCI for settling rent matters between tenants and owners, holding of a successful Business Opportunities Conference in Dubai, Establishment of NADRA facility centre at ICCI.

He also mentioned the success of the construction of a state of the art expo center, Acceptance of a proposal for the construction of an Industrial Estate, Inking of an agreement with CDA for the upgradation of the washrooms of different markets, Establishment of the Mediation Council at ICCI for settling rent matters between tenants and owners, holding of a successful Business Opportunities Conference in Dubai, Establishment of NADRA facility centre at ICCI.

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plants in commercial areas as well as residential areas of Islamabad, provision of computers to educational institutions, installation of CCTV cameras and their linkage with safety project and holding of conferences to enhance the soft image of the country.

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Secretary General FPCCI Labort, Zaki Ejaz, Ahmed, Chomy, Group leader Sialkot, Shaikh Riaz ud Din, President FPCCI Lahore, Zaki Ejaz, Group leader Small Chambers and Small Industries, Shahid Ghaffoor Pracha, Group leader Chakwal Chamber, Qazi Akbar, Group leader KPK Syed Jawad Hussain Kazmi, former President Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce Samina Fazil and other paid tributes to late S.M. Munir and said that Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry under the leadership of Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has created a unique example of service to the community. Senior Vice President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Faad Wahed extended his sincere gratitude to every one for their support to arrange the ceremony in a successful manner. At the end momentous shields were presented to S.M.



ISLAMABAD: Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Minister of State (IT & Telecommunication), in a meeting with Meta delegation.

Bismah Maroof announces retirement from cricket

KARACHI (INP) Former captain Bismah Maroof has announced her retirement from all cricket with immediate effect. A left-handed batswoman, Bismah made her ODI debut against India in 2006 and her T20 debut against India in 2009. She was named in the Pakistan 276 international matches, the most by any Pakistani woman cricketer. She has scored 6,262 international runs, including 33 half-centuries, and has taken 30 international wickets with her right-arm leg-spin.

"I have decided to retire from the game I love the most. It has been an incredible journey, filled with challenges, victories, and unforgettable memories. I want to express my gratitude to my family who has supported me throughout my

cricketing journey, from the very beginning until now. I also want to extend my thanks to the Pakistan Cricket Board for believing in me and providing the platform to showcase my talent. The support from the PCB has been invaluable. I am particularly grateful for implementing the first-ever parental policy for fans, which enabled me to be a mother. I am deeply grateful to the fans whose unwavering support has been a constant throughout my career, wherever and whenever I represented my country. Lastly, I would like to thank my fellow players, who have become like family to me. The camaraderie we shared both on and off the field is something I will cherish forever." Head of Women's Cricket, Tania Malik:

TENDER NOTICE

The Director General Research and Supplies Livestock & Dairy Development Department Balochistan Quetta invites bids from eligible Bidders for supply of following items: TSE-23240388291 Only electronic bid will be submitted. No physical bid is required. Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. Tender/Fee Rs. 1000/-

S.No	Class of Object	Bid Security
1.	Animal Feed & Medicinal (Total Items) (Lot) 399	188,383 PKR

Procurements shall be made under the Islamabad Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: 1. Assignments of Similar Nature and Complexity 0.000,000 in Previous 3 Years. Turn over of at least 5,000,000 PKR in 3 Subsequent Previous Years. Presence in Active Tax Payor List, Sales Tax Certificate. The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. It is not permissible. Submission of the proposed Bid Security in case Bid Security is not found as required during financial evaluation the bidding firm shall be disqualified as ineligible and non-responsive. Submission of the required Bidding document. Fee: Maximum Days for supply of items 30 days. Must unconditionally agree with all the instructions, terms & conditions specified in the bidding documents & contract agreement. Mandatory for firms other than Manufacturers. Procedure of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure: Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Deposit of Call of amount 188,383 PKR specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.gov.pk issuance of tender documents: Complete Bidding Document can be viewed at www.bppra.gov.pk. Last Date of bid submission: Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by 10 May, 2024 till 12:00 PM through supplier dashboard. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at 01:00 PM by EPPCS System. Address: Directorate General of Research & Supplies, Livestock & Dairy Development Department, Quetta. Email: dgri@dgd.gov.pk. Phone no: 981911343

Director General Research and Supplies Livestock & Dairy Development Department

PRO No.1987/25-04-2024

Govt mulls slashing solar Net Metering rates by Rs10 per unit

ISLAMABAD (INP): The government is contemplating a significant reduction in the rates paid to consumers who generate solar power through net metering, a move that may ignite criticism and concern.

The potential change comes as solar power adoption in Pakistan has surged, with installed capacity reaching 3,000 megawatts, reported a section of the press.

Currently, net metering users receive Rs21 per unit for the excess electricity they feed back into the grid. However, the government is considering a drastic cut, bringing the rate down to Rs11 per unit.

The proposed reduction would translate to a loss of Rs10 per unit for solar power genera-

tors. The government's rationale behind the move is rooted in the financial burden of capacity charges paid to Independent Power Producers (IPPs).

These charges are incurred regardless of whether the government actually purchases electricity from IPPs.

The widespread adoption of solar panels has disrupted the government's capacity payment plan.

The sources told that wealthier individuals who can afford solar panels are going solar and receiving zero bills, shifting the cost burden of capacity charges onto poorer consumers who rely on conventional electricity sources.

While the government maintains its support for solar energy,

it deems the current net metering rate of Rs21-22 per unit as unsustainable, the sources said.

Officials argue that this rate allows consumers to recover their solar panel installation costs within a mere 18 months, whereas the government aims to extend this payback period to 10 years.

The Power Division contends that consumers install solar systems primarily for their own needs, and therefore, the buyback rate for surplus electricity should align with the purchasing power of their power distribution companies or discos. Last year a proposal to end net metering was reported in Pakistani media, leading to a backlash. The Solar Association back then voiced strong opposition to rate cuts, leading to a postponement of the decision.



ISLAMABAD: Kanni Wignaraja, United Nations Assistant Secretary General (ASG), Asia, and the Pacific calls on Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema.

NPF embarks on multifaceted projects for profitability, welfare

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a strategic move towards profitability and the welfare of its employees, the National Police Foundation (NPF) has unveiled

ambitious plans to diversify its portfolio with world-class projects spanning various sectors.

The Managing Director of NPF Sabir Ahmed revealed the institution's intentions to venture into the housing sector alongside agriculture, information technology, education, and health services.

Addressing journalists here at the NPF headquarters on Thursday, MD Sabir Ahmed outlined the shift in priorities, emphasizing the organization's commitment to launching projects aimed at enhancing the livelihoods of police personnel and their families.

Previously focused primarily on housing initiatives, the NPF is now poised to spearhead ventures that promise both profitability and societal impact.

While sharing the details of the project, he revealed that under the directive of the Directorate of Agribusiness, the foundation will champion corporate farming endeavors, with a specific focus on cultivating edible oil crops.

This initiative not only aims to generate revenue but also aims to curb the government's import expenditure by fostering self-sufficiency in essential agricultural products.

Moreover, the NPF's foray into the IT sector entails the provision of modern education and integrated health services. Through the IT Business Directorate, the foundation plans to offer skill development programs online, equipping

youngsters with the expertise to secure high-paying jobs both locally and abroad. This initiative seeks to leverage foreign expertise to enhance the employability of the youth, particularly in the Gulf countries.

In the first phase, four directorates have been established in the Police Foundation, including Agri-Business, IT Development, Education and Integrated Health Services, while many other projects are also under consideration. Responding to a question, he stated that corporate farming will be promoted under the Directorate of Agribusiness, in which cultivation of edible oil will be done and work on it has been officially started. Others will develop products that will not only be profitable but also help reduce the government's import bill.

Responding another question, he stated that world-class projects will be launched through the IT Business Directorate and skill development programs will be launched through online services, in which training will be provided to the youth while exposing them to modern technology.

Through this they will be able to work online from home and get projects from different countries of the world to make their income according to global standards.

The services of foreign experts will be taken for this. While in the field of civil engineering, training will be given to the youth with the support of foreign companies so that our youth can get high jobs in the Gulf countries, he added. In addition to bolstering employment prospects, the NPF intends to address critical healthcare needs by establishing blood banks nationwide under the Directorate of Integrated Health Services.

This strategic move ensures the availability of blood for emergency medical procedures, thereby contributing to enhanced healthcare accessibility across the country, he added.

Furthermore, the foundation pledges to assume financial responsibility for numerous police schools established in provincial regions, reaffirming its commitment to education under the Directorate of Education.

With a comprehensive approach encompassing diverse sectors, the National Police Foundation is poised to usher in a new era of profitability and welfare, promising tangible benefits for its stakeholders and the wider community.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination Ahsan Iqbal chairs a meeting to review progress over National Sports Revival Conference and National Games.



ABBOTTABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif offering condolences to the family members of Pakistan Customs Inspector Husnain Ali Tirmazi Shaheed in Abbottabad.

Stock exchange hits record high: KSE-100 index crosses 72,500 points

KARACHI (INP): The Karachi Stock Exchange witnessed another remarkable surge today as the benchmark KSE-100 index soared to unprecedented heights, reaching a historical milestone of 72,501 points.

Investors exuded confidence in the market as the bullish trend persisted, signalling robust economic sentiment within Pakistan's financial landscape.

Throughout the trading session, the index surged by an impressive 450 points, reflecting the substantial influx of investment and optimism among market participants.

Commenting on the ex-

traordinary performance of the market, financial analysts attributed the upward trajectory to several factors, including favourable economic indicators, strong corporate earnings, and the government's proactive policies to stimulate economic growth.

Moreover, the ongoing infrastructural developments and initiatives aimed at enhancing investor confidence have contributed significantly to the market's resilience and upward momentum.

Meanwhile, in the currency market, the value of the US dollar witnessed a marginal increase, with interbank rates

rising by six paise.

The dollar was quoted at Rs278.45 in the interbank market, reflecting the dynamic nature of foreign exchange fluctuations amidst the prevailing market conditions.

Market observers remain optimistic about the future trajectory of the Karachi Stock Exchange, anticipating sustained growth and stability in the coming days.

As Pakistan continues to position itself as an attractive destination for investment, the bullish sentiment in the stock market serves as a testament to the country's economic resilience and potential for long-term prosperity.

PM Shehbaz Sharif announces 150 buses for Karachi

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has announced 150 buses for Karachi during his inaugural visit to the city.

The premier revealed the decision to allocate 150 buses following a request from Sindh Minister for Transport, Sharjeel Inam Memon, during a high-level meeting. Sindh Transport Minister Memon had requested the prime minister to provide 300 buses for Karachi.

However, the PM said that the federal government would provide 150 buses to the Sindh transport department to add them to their existing fleet. PM Shehbaz also commended the efforts of the Sindh government in enhancing transportation services for the public dur-

ing his visit to the Sindh government's transport system.

About the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project, the CM told the prime minister that on the advice of the federal government, a revised feasibility study was undertaken in 2023 and shared with the Economic Affairs Division & Ministry of Transport, Peoples Republic of China on May 4, 2023. He requested the prime minister to order the ministry concerned to facilitate the framework agreement for the execution of the KCR under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

He also requested the prime minister to direct the railways ministry to grant the

"Right of Way" (RoW) of the KCR to the Sindh government.

At this, the prime minister directed the planning minister to take up the KCR project and remove all the impediments in its way so that it could be executed.

The high-level meeting was convened at the Chief Minister's House, presided over by PM Shehbaz. Federal Ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Owais

Leghari, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Musadik Malik, Jam Kamal, and Aataullah Tarar accompanied the prime minister, while Sindh Chief Minister Syed Muralid Ali Shah, along with provincial ministers and officials, represented the host province.



QUETTA: MPA Zamrak Khan Achakzai addressing a press conference.

Rain expected in most parts of country

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast rainstorm/thunderstorm for Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, south

Punjab and upper Sindh during the next 24 hours. Partly cloudy weather with rain-windstorm/thunderstorm is expected at isolated places in Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir and adjoining hilly areas.

The PMD has warned that isolated/moderate to heavy rainfall may generate flash flood in local nullahs, streams of Balochistan specially in Nooshki, Chagai,

Kharan, Turbat, Kech, Gwadar, Awaran, Ziarat, Pishin, Harnai, Zhob, Barkhan and Naseerabad from 25th to 27th April. Isolated/moderate to heavy rainfall may generate flash flood in local nullahs, streams of Dir, Swat, Chitral, Manshera,

Kohistan and Kashmir on April 27 and April 28.

The possibility of landslides in upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Murree, Galiyat, Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan may affect the vulnerable locations from April 27-29. The Met Office said that windstorm/hailstorm and lightning may affect human lives, standing crops, loose structures like electric poles, vehicles and

solar panels etc. during the period. According to the synoptic situation, a westerly wave was affecting western parts of the country and likely to grip

mos.

Upper and central parts on April 26.

During the last 24 hours, dry weather prevailed over most parts of the country, while hot in southern parts. However, rain-windstorm/thunderstorm occurred at isolated places in upper

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, Kashmir and adjoining hilly areas.

According to a PDMA spokesperson there are chances of gusty wind, rain with thunder and hails at a few places in Punjab from Wednesday till April 29. PDMA DG

Irfan Ali Kathia has issued instructions to the deputy commissioners across the Punjab province to remain alert. Kathia said that departments concerned

should be on alert to deal with any emergency situation. The district emergency operation centers of all districts including the provincial control room have

also been alerted. Monitoring of the situation in the PDMA control room continues 24/7. Rescue 1122 and other rescue agencies must keep the machinery and personnel alert, he added.